

To Zzzzzz...or not to Zzzzzz...

Sleep is a basic drive of nature. Having enough sleep helps us think more clearly, complete complex tasks better and enjoy every day life more fully. Sleep is, in essence, food for the brain. Being too sleepy can cause short-term memory loss and lower grades, a negative mood (like irritability, anger, sadness, worry), inconsistent performance on tests, sports, and work, and loss of some self-control (do you ever have trouble "sitting still" or staying focused?). Furthermore, drivers age 25 or under cause more than one-half of all crashes where the driver has fallen asleep.

Teenagers need more sleep because of the profound (that's BIG) changes that go on with physical growth, hormones, social development, and intellectual development during puberty. That also explains why teenagers get sleepy during the day if they don't get enough sleep at night.

So what's up (besides you at night)?

When you enter puberty, your body's biological (circadian) timing system undergoes a "phase delay." You tend to fall asleep later and wake up later. Studies show that the typical high school student's natural time to fall asleep is 11:00 pm or later because your body is telling you that it's only 8:00 pm. Having a weekend sleep schedule that includes more sleep than weekdays can contribute to a shift in phase, trouble falling asleep or awaking, and waking up a lot in the middle of the night. Many U.S. adolescents do not get enough sleep. **Teens need between 8.5 and 9.5 hours of sleep each night in order to awaken refreshed and not tired.**

About every 90 minutes while you're sleeping, your brain goes through 4 stages of sleep then moves into the most important stage, REM Sleep, which is the dream stage. Researchers believe that REM is important for learning and memory. You cycle through all the stages many times throughout the night. That cycle includes a few times of momentary wakefulness. Those are the times when you wake, look at your clock or go to the bathroom, and then go back to sleep. If you're staying up during those times of wakefulness, it may be something you need to discuss with your doctor, physician assistant, or counselor.



What can YOU do get more Zzzzzz's?

- First, make sure your bedroom is set up as a place that encourages sleep.
 - o Select a comfortable mattress, pillow, sheets, and clothing.
 - o Keep the bedroom quiet. You may like to use a fan (not blowing on you) as "white noise" to drown out sound. That's better than a T.V. or radio.
 - o Keep your bedroom as dark as possible at night and get those lights bright first thing in the morning.
- Don't eat or do your homework in bed. Reserve your bed for sleep only.
- Stop drinking anything with caffeine (especially tea and soda) 4-6 hours before bedtime. Keep caffeine free beverages around.
- Avoid smoking cigarettes before bed. They are a stimulant and may keep you awake.
- Don't go to bed too full or hungry. A light carbohydrate snack, like crackers or cereal, is fine.
- Set up a pattern of getting to bed about the same time every night and waking up around the same time every morning. As hard as it may seem, stick close to that schedule on weekends, too.
- Develop a pre-sleep ritual before you go to bed in order to relax. This may include:
 - Brushing your teeth and taking a hot shower
 - Lower the room temperature
 - Use time to read, watch T.V., listen to music or have a quiet talk. Don't activate your brain by problem solving, planning for the next day, or reading a thriller.
 - Once you're in bed, try counting backwards from 100 with your eyes closed. It may ease your mind into sleep

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It's time to go back to school again!!! No more lazy days of sleeping until noon and lounging around the house. Chances are you probably are having trouble getting back into the routine of early mornings. You probably hit the snooze button on the alarm until the absolute last minute and then go dashing out the door. And you are probably skipping the most important part of your day. Breakfast.

Solution: Eat breakfast. If you aren't able to make some extra time to sit down and eat breakfast, or if you don't like to eat a big meal in the morning, here are some simple and quick breakfast ideas.

What can YOU do get more Zzzzzz's?
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- If you have tried all of this and you're still having insomnia on a regular basis, it's time to talk to a parent. You may, together, be able to figure out what's making it so hard for you to sleep. Try keeping a sleep journal (available at: <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/publications/sleepdiary.cfm>). A trip to the doctor is the next smart step. You'll notice medications are not listed anywhere in this article. The solution is not usually "a pill" that will help you sleep. Try some of the steps above first and hopefully you will see fast results and be sleeping like a baby in no time!

Social smoking is smoking less than every day. A social smoker may smoke a few cigarettes one night, and then not smoke again for several days or even weeks later. Many people who smoke socially don't realize that occasional smoking can be harmful to their health and lead to an unwanted addiction. Some people can have an occasional cigarette and not become dependent on nicotine, but it's easy to increase how much you smoke without even noticing. Most long-term smokers started out as social smokers, but once your body is addicted to nicotine, it's very hard to quit. Social smokers are more likely to get bronchitis, coughs and asthma attacks than non-smokers. Cigarettes give you bad breath, make your clothes smell, discolor your teeth, make you age prematurely, and smoking for as little as five years can permanently damage your eyes, throat, bones, joints and skin. If you are around people who smoke, you may be tempted to smoke too. It may even seem like smoking makes social situations easier, but the risks are just not worth it!



Figure 1

WARNING SIGNS - WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- If you are someone you know has been exhibiting any of these signs, please make sure to get help. Talk to a friend, school personnel, clergy, mental health person, a parent or even call the suicide hotline at **1-800-SUICIDE**.

Zzzzzzzzzzzz.....